

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, February 11, 2009 – 4:00pm
Leonard Recreation Center – 6324 Ballinger Road

PRESENT MEMBERS: Rose Marie Ponton, Chair, Carl Brower, Jr., Vice-Chair, Paul Brown, Marc Bush (arrived 4:06), Lori Galbreath

ABSENT MEMBERS: Ken Free, David Hoggard

OTHERS PRESENT: Steve Branson, Candice Bruton, Kathy Cates, Martha Cook, Cindy Hipp, John Hughes, Dan Maxson, Bob Morgan, Deputy City Manager and Acting Parks & Recreation Director (arrived 4:40), Brooks Mullane, Marcie Richardson, Ann Steighner, Chair, Greensboro Beautiful, Inc, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson, Jonathan Woodburn

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Leonard Recreation Center. Rose Marie Ponton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:04pm.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 14, 2009 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

Recognition

John Hughes, Youth and Community Services Manager, recognized the Parks and Recreation January Employee of the Month, Cindy Hipp.

Leonard Recreation Center Presentation

Jonathan Woodburn, Leonard Recreation Center Director, presented the Commission with events and programs currently held at the center.

OLD BUSINESS

Interim Director Selection Process Update

Due to the late arrival of Bob Morgan, Deputy City Manager, this item was presented later during the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Naming Request: The Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden

Ann Steighner, Chair, Greensboro Beautiful, Inc, came before the Commission requesting to name the Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden in perpetuity. Stanley Cates Tanger had committed a gift of one million dollars to Greensboro Beautiful to rename the Bicentennial Garden to Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden for a period of 25 years. Mr. Tanger desires to name the Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden in perpetuity and has committed an additional one million dollar gift to Greensboro Beautiful, Inc, effective January 22, 2009. These funds as well as funds from the previous naming pledge will be placed into a fund restricted to providing support to Greensboro's public gardens at the discretion of the Board of Directors of Greensboro Beautiful, Inc. Greensboro Beautiful public gardens committee and the Greensboro Beautiful Board of Directors endorse the naming of Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden in perpetuity. If approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission and in recognition of this major investment Greensboro Beautiful and Greensboro Parks and Recreation agree to maintain permanent signage at the gardens, reading Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden at the three agreed upon locations in perpetuity. Greensboro Beautiful requests the Parks and Recreation Commission approve the naming of the Tanger Family Bicentennial Garden in perpetuity.

Ponton stated that this item was previously brought forth to the Commission; however a 30 day public input opportunity was not given. Ponton stated that she would like to appoint a sub committee of the Commission to discuss this item and the sub committee will return with a report during the next Commission meeting.

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that signage will be posted informing the public that a recommendation has been made to continue to maintain the current name of the Bicentennial Gardens in perpetuity.

Caldwell Historic Park

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that the new Caldwell Interpretive Center has been well attended. Parks and Recreation envisioned having items to display interpretation of David and Rachel Caldwell. Staff did not expect that this summer during an archeological dig there would be artifacts found more significant than what was thought to be found revealing numerous pieces of that time period. These are pieces that the city will own. Currently the Parks and Recreation Department is budgeted for one full time staff person and some roster/seasonal positions at Caldwell. With the anticipation of a higher volume of circulation, there are hopes to bring history to and attract many to Caldwell. Staff was tasked to look at how to put our best foot forward with a very limited amount of historical base. The department has been removed from history in terms of Tannenbaum and as a result Caldwell is one of the department's last remaining pieces. The Historical Museum has a long history of service to our community and has quite a few experts employed. Parks and Recreation approached the Library Department regarding collaboration for Caldwell. Caldwell can be a very bright spot for the City of Greensboro and a positive piece for Greensboro to highlight these artifacts and be able to do a high level of interpretation. The Department is currently looking at a merger of resources. The Library Department and Historical Museum have determined that they would be able to help with Caldwell and would highlight the artifacts, take advantage of the location, and deal with high volumes of people. They are willing to take what resources they have and combine them with Parks and Recreation. Staff is looking into having Caldwell Interpretive Museum placed under the supervision of the Libraries which would take place on March 30, 2009. This is another effort on behalf of the organization to better utilize our resources and provide a superior service to the community.

Brower inquired what would the partnership entail and who will be responsible for maintaining the park.

Wilson responded stating that if the current Caldwell Director was absent there may be difficulty providing back up if perhaps a tour group was scheduled to arrive. There is seasonal staff; however they are limited to the number of hours allowed to work and limited in expertise. Although they are great staff there is not the same vested interest as a person with a master's degree in history would have. Support could not be provided in this situation in order to provide good service. What is now going to be a state wide or southeast regional recognizable set of artifacts housed at this facility there would need to be some depth on that roster/seasonal employee. This is an opportunity for the Historical Museum to collaborate, give more expertise, and provide a level of support to the public. Parks and Recreation would continue to maintain the facility with the experts located at the Gardens next to Caldwell. They have agreed and are willing to continue to do so. Garden staff has a long history with the Libraries given their expertise at several other locations across Greensboro.

Marc Bush inquired if there is a budget impact figure.

Wilson replied stating that the budget impact for Parks and Recreation is not a great deal of savings in terms of what actually happens right now. Some funds that are available will be shifted, meaning funds that have been put into Caldwell as an operation. Parks and Recreation will commit what resources are available but will not have to seek funds to operate this facility at the level it needs to be.

Maxson stated that Parks and Recreation does not have additional financial responsibilities when it is turned over to the Historical Museum. Any growth of the facility will be the financial responsibility of the Libraries.

Ponton inquired if the park itself would remain under Parks and Recreation or would the department only maintain the grounds.

Wilson replied stating that the park would remain under Parks and Recreation. Wilson gave the example of Price Park where the most popular library in Greensboro is located and the Department still manages the park and

maintains the grounds. Wilson continued stating that staff will continue to approach the Commission with opportunities that provide the best service and are most efficient.

2009-10 Budget Process Update

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, stated that the current economic situation has impacted the City of Greensboro operations. Since last September the city has been in a hiring freeze. The City Manager reviews every vacancy and determines the priority of hiring for those vacant positions. This is an indication of how the City is watching dollars that are spent on a daily basis. The City Manager is accepting online suggestions from employees on how to save money in the present and in the future. The next fiscal year is grim, one reason being because sales tax the city receives is not coming in at levels that were projected a year ago. The shortfall is estimated at approximately 8-11 million dollars that the City will need to cover in the upcoming year budget. This is a very large figure and there is not official word yet on how revenues that may be coming from the state could perhaps impact the city or local governments across the state. Parks and Recreation staff have submitted their budgets to Parks and Recreation Administration who is in the process of putting those budgets together to get an idea of where the department is based on preliminary estimates of what we were projecting this time last year. Budgets are being entered now as a baseline to begin serious discussions in the coming weeks on how the City's entire organization can make up the 8-11 million dollar shortfalls. The City Manager and City Council have committed to conducting public meetings in the upcoming weeks in each council district to seek public guidance on the priorities of programs to assist with the development of the budget and ways to meet the shortfall. As the meeting dates and times are set the Commission will be informed. City Council has pledged no tax increase; therefore public input is needed on priority/non-priority programs. The goal of the Managers Office and Department Heads is to be able to meet the needs of citizens then see how to reallocate resources to meet those needs. The City Manager has been meeting with employees throughout the city to inform them that there is an emphasis to try to avoid a reduction in force or severe cuts in areas that have already suffered severe cuts in the past. The Commission will continue to be updated.

Community Gardens

Candice Bruton, Planning and Project Development Manager, stated that there is currently a high community interest in community gardens and establishing space for such gardens so they may garden collectively. Bruton stated that there will be a community garden located in the future Keeley Park. There is also one located in the Glenwood Neighborhood at Steelman Park where there are 20-24 plots that for a very nominal fee neighbors can work their own plot of flowers, vegetables, fruits, etc. This idea is a great asset to communities and there is a lot of emphasis around the issue now. Staff is currently strategizing on how to best facilitate the need. A group made up of people from the Agricultural Extension and NC A&T is submitting a grant for a food production garden to be used for multiple neighborhood associations, interested citizens, the faith community, and retirement homes. The department as an organization would like to establish some means to bring forth what Parks and Recreation can do and have resources to direct people to. Bruton stated that a proposal has been submitted to the Manager's Office to build the community garden piece at Keeley Park without adding maintenance and operation. Staff is waiting to hear their response. Neighborhood gardens are self sufficient, self supporting, and self operated. Parks and Recreation will assist in site selection, getting the site ready then turning it over to the neighborhood. It does take dedicated people and a dedicated volunteer to spear head their neighborhood to recruit people to garden the plots.

Brower inquired if there are other parks in the community besides Steelman that currently have a community garden and inquired on the timeframe of when some community gardens will be established. Brower requested that the Commission be informed of where the future community gardens will be located.

Bruton replied stating that currently Steelman Park is the only park that consists of a community garden, but there is high interest in other areas. Bruton stated that as the group evolves they will be able to produce some strategic planning efforts that would identify areas for a garden that would not require much initial maintenance. Staff is currently assessing property once they are contacted by a neighborhood. There has been some preliminary conversation with the school system for some potential areas on their property.

Brown inquired as to the size of the plots.

Bruton responded stating that the plot in Steelman Park is 4x20 feet.

Mullane added that community gardens are normally raised beds.

Interim Director Selection Process Update (postponed from earlier during the meeting)

On behalf of Bob Morgan, Deputy City Manager, Maxson reported that the City Manager's Office solicited letters of interest from across the City's organization from anyone wanting to serve as an interim Director for Parks and Recreation for up to six months while a permanent replacement is selected. As of today, the City Manager's Office has been unable to begin the process of reviewing the letters of interest. They hope to do this as quickly as possible. Bob Morgan is meeting weekly with the Parks and Recreation Division Managers. The Human Resources Department has begun research regarding the search process for a permanent director.

Maxson turned the meeting over to Bob Morgan who had just arrived.

Morgan apologized for being late and stated the he is hopeful to conduct interviews within the next couple of weeks. The reason for not yet beginning is due to the final stages of selecting a Fire Chief. Another reason being is that Mitch Johnson, City Manager, is conducting departmental budget meetings with staff across the city. Johnson has invested a lot of time communicating to the employees the current financial situation and what will need to be done during the budget process.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

ACTING DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

- NONE -

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Lori Galbreath informed the Commission that she is now employed at A&T State University, Directing their new Call Center; therefore she would not be able to serve as the Commission's representative for Playful City.

Marc Bush stated that Brandt Taylor, Boy Scout, was recognized by the Bryan Foundation and received a grant from the Bryan Foundation through the Grasshoppers for his ball field project at Pomona Ball field. He has raised \$100,000 to be used towards the project. (This Eagle Scout project was approved by the Commission on September 13, 2006)

Bush asked Morgan how long has the process taken for the Fire Chief selection process.

Morgan replied stating approximately 5 months.

Bush requested updates on the skate park, War Memorial Stadium, and the aquatic center.

Bruton replied stating updates will be given at the next Commission meeting.

Paul Brown asked Morgan if the City Manager has held budget meetings with the Parks and Recreation staff.

Morgan replied stating that the meetings with Parks and Recreation will be held in March. One of the reasons for these meetings is to ask employees if they have ideas on ways for the city to save money, they can do this verbally or on the city's internal website. A few ideas have already been submitted. The City Manager's Office hopes to present ideas to City Council by early April. Morgan stated that the city is operating with 10% vacant positions but staff has stepped up to make sure citizens are being served. The city has been operating under these conditions for quite awhile and it is time to inform the community that there are certain things that the city can no longer afford to do. These will be tough decisions to make.

Rose Marie Ponton announced the appointment of new Commission Member, William “Bill” Knight who will be attending the next Commission meeting. Ponton requested a volunteer to serve as a Commission representative for Playful City. Ponton requested information on the outcome of the Hope Project events scheduled for February and the status of this program.

With no further business Ponton adjourned the meeting at 4:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation